

# REPORT

no. 3

OF

DRS. COGSWELL AND WHITE,

SPECIAL AGENTS TO VISIT

CONN. SICK AND WOUNDED SOLDIERS

IN THE

UNITED STATES GENERAL HOSPITALS.

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STATE OF CONNECTICUT, }  
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, }

HARTFORD, 12th May, 1863.

*To the Senate and House of Representatives,  
in General Assembly convened:*

I herewith transmit the Report of Drs. Cogswell and White,  
Special Agents from this Department to visit the sick and wounded  
Connecticut Soldiers.

WM. A. BUCKINGHAM.



## REPORT.

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*To Hon. Wm. A. Buckingham, Governor of the State of Connecticut:*

THE undersigned, appointed in January last past, by your Excellency, special agents to look after the interest of Connecticut sick and wounded soldiers in the U. S. General Hospitals, beg leave to report, that they have been diligent and faithful in the discharge of the duties devolving upon them by reason of said appointment, and have good reason to believe that they have, to a very considerable extent, subserved the cause of humanity, and promoted the interests of the State and of the service.

Commencing their labors at New Haven, Conn., they visited the Military Hospital there, for the purpose of ascertaining its condition, and its capacity for receiving such Connecticut men as it might be possible to get transferred to their native State for treatment. Found this institution in good working order, and ably conducted under the charge of Dr. P. A. Jewett, assisted by competent and efficient ward surgeons. Your agents found this hospital, though well conducted, so small as to be entirely inadequate to the wants of Connecticut men, and took the liberty to recommend and urge upon the proper authority that it be enlarged, and the accommodations extended; this they are very glad to know has been done, and that its capacity is now such as to be equal to any emergency which has yet arisen.

Your agents next directed their attention to the General Hospitals in Baltimore, Md. Found there a dozen or more, each and every one containing a greater or less number of Connecticut men, in all amounting to about two hundred. These hospitals were found in excellent condition,—patients as comfortable as they could expect to be in the buildings occupied for hospital purposes, which were, with the exception of those at Stewart's

Mansion and Patterson Park, such as had been deserted by rebels, with such other buildings as could be obtained for this use, such as churches, seminaries, hotels, &c. ; and though with such improvements as had been made in them, answering very well—in the opinion of your agents they are much inferior to those which have been erected by government expressly for this purpose. In each and every hospital they obtained from the register in the office of the surgeon in charge a full list of all Connecticut men, the regiment and company to which they belonged and the ward in which they might be found,—then sought them out individually, taking them cordially by the hand, and speaking to them words of comfort and hope ; obtaining discharges for many who were in their opinion fully entitled to such consideration, and for others such little privileges as they might desire, looking and inquiring particularly after the manner in which they were fed, clothed, lodged, warmed, and professionally cared for, and they are glad to state that they have heard no word of complaint from the men, and seen very little to condemn. Your agents would do violence to their own feelings, and injustice to the medical authorities of Baltimore—the Medical Director, Medical Purveyor, surgeons in charge of hospitals, and all others with whom they came in contact, should they fail to acknowledge and duly appreciate the extreme courtesy and kindness with which they were received and treated by one and all, affording every facility for the accomplishment of their mission. They would be acting neither in accordance with duty nor inclination were they to omit to make mention also of many of the first citizens of Baltimore, both male and female, who received and treated them with marked politeness, and who manifested great interest in their mission, and in the welfare of the sick and wounded soldiers in hospital. The ladies, besides contributing delicacies with a liberal hand, gave much of their time and personal services in cooking for and administering to the wants and necessities of this grateful and appreciating class of individuals.

Bidding adieu to Baltimore, with a lingering look behind, your agents next visited Frederick City, also in Maryland. Here they found three hospitals, in which were about one hundred Connecticut men. This being near the battle-field of Antietam, a great number of the men here had been wounded, many of

them badly, and had suffered amputation of legs and arms, and other surgical operations. Their wounds had nearly all healed, leaving many permanently crippled, and on the whole they presented rather a sorry appearance. The hospitals here consisted, one, of a series of old barracks, the other two; each of a succession of canvas tents, some 25 feet in width, by, perhaps, 120 feet in length.

The men were well lodged, but the tents were rather cold, and there was a disposition to complain of the fare; especially by some of those in the barracks, in relation to the treatment they received at the hands of nurses and others with whom they had to do.

The surgeons in charge of these hospitals received your agents with courtesy, treating them with politeness and affording them every facility they desired for investigating in regard to the condition of the men.

How much occasion the inmates of these hospitals had for complaint your agents will not attempt here to decide—suffice it to say they obtained from the Surgeon-General an order for their transfer to the U. S. General Hospital at New Haven, where they now all are, receiving all the attention which their several cases require and all the comfort which an efficient medical staff, a full larder, and an appreciating and sympathizing public can bestow.

Your agents next gave their attention to the military hospitals within the District of Columbia. There are here some thirty or forty general hospitals, many of them extensive and containing in all from three to four hundred Connecticut men. Generally they are in a pretty comfortable state, though there are exceptions to this general assertion. There were here a good many Connecticut sick and wounded, recently brought up from the front, whose condition demanded the good offices of your agents, which were freely given to the full extent of their ability and authority, and applied according to the wants and necessities of each individual case, in such a manner as to give all the aid and comfort possible under the circumstances. Your agents found in these institutions many men whose usefulness as soldiers was at an end, some of whose cases, in consequence of the immense pressure of business upon the surgeons in charge, may have been overlooked or neglected. To these cases, of which more or less were found in



every hospital, they did not fail to call the attention of the medical authorities, urging them from motives of humanity as well as economy to give the patients speedy examination with reference to a discharge, and, if found fit and proper subjects for such favor, to consummate it with as little *red tape* as possible, and send them with glad and grateful hearts to their anxious families. Your agents did not fail to suggest anything rational which they thought would contribute to the comfort of the men, and they are most happy to be able to say that all suggestions of theirs received respectful consideration and in many instances resulted much to the interest of the soldiers.

It is but simple justice to say that the medical men connected with these institutions are very able and most worthy men, and that your agents were received by them most courteously and kindly, and were afforded every opportunity for accomplishing their work. The General Hospital at Alexandria was also visited. Here were found about twenty-five Connecticut men, in a very comfortable condition. The hospital buildings here were, like those in Baltimore, hotels and mansions deserted by the rebels, great changes having been made in them by the removal of partitions, general cleanliness, painting, whitewashing, and such other measures as should render them healthful, pleasant, and convenient, while no pains had been spared in cleaning, draining, grading, and beautifying the grounds connected therewith; even trees and flowering plants and shrubs had not been omitted in making the surroundings inviting and attractive to the worn-down and invalid soldier. All this had been done by detailed men and convalescents, without expense to Government or any one, unless, indeed, the surgeon in charge may have made some sacrifices. In no institution visited by your agents have they found a medical staff more thoroughly devoted to the work before them, and none where the patients manifested a more cordial good feeling toward and unlimited confidence in those who had the charge of them; and they can not repress a feeling of state pride when they report that this institution is in charge of a Connecticut man, Dr. Edwin Bently of Norwich.

Your Agents have also visited the General Hospital at Newark, New Jersey,—found a well regulated institution in able hands, but containing a very small number of Connecticut men, and therefore made their stay very short. They have visited a



part of the Hospitals in Philadelphia, which are very numerous, and of very large capacity, containing in some instances as many as three thousand beds. There are no institutions of this kind in this country, and perhaps none in the world, better administered, better regulated and more perfectly systematized than these ;—but your Agents are compelled to say that for want of time and because there were so many more imperiously demanding their attention, they visited but few of them. For the same reason only a part of those in New York have as yet been visited, so very little can be said of them or of those in Philadelphia, except that so far as seen, they were in fine order and fully answering the purposes of their creation.

The United States Military Hospital at Portsmouth Grove, R. I., your Agents found to be a larger institution of its kind than any found south of Philadelphia. It is situated on the left bank of the Narraganset Bay, one of the most beautiful and apparently healthful locations in the world,—the whole laid out and arranged with care and good taste, with a capacity for accommodating some sixteen or eighteen hundred men, though now reduced to eight hundred, nearly all of whom are able to come to the public table. Conspicuous among the evidences of taste with which the whole thing has been gotten up is their cemetery, in which about one hundred soldiers have been interred. Much labor has been bestowed upon its grounds, naturally beautiful ; the graves are raised and turfed uniformly, and all decorated with pots of flowers and shrubs, surrounded with sea shells, handsomely arranged in circles. They have a neat Chapel, seating about three hundred persons,—and an able Chaplain. Your Agents attended an interesting service there comprising excellent preaching, fine singing, and instrumental music, the soldiers taking an active part.

The interior arrangements of the Hospital, under the charge of Dr. Edwards, compared favorably with other institutions visited. Twenty-two Connecticut men were found here, who, although they had nothing of which to complain, were very desirous to be transferred to New Haven, which is now about being accomplished.

There is one other place, visited, over which your Agents would gladly draw an impenetrable veil, but stern duty compels them to report the Convalescent Camp, so misnamed, in Virginia,

as, in their opinion, an unmitigated pest, destructive alike to the health and morals of the men and as a nuisance which ought to be abated. It is but plain justice to say that the Medical authorities at Washington disclaim its paternity and all responsibility for its consequences. Here were found about 125 Connecticut men, a large portion of whom have since been discharged from the service or returned to duty. Your Agents, having particularized as far as the limits of a brief report will admit, would say that on the whole, they have witnessed much less of unnecessary suffering than they had been led, by the various rumors abroad, to expect, though, that there is much which cannot be avoided in the field and camp hospitals, they have, from personal observation, good reason to know; nor have they any reason to doubt that, in the commencement of the war, there was much suffering through all the Army Hospitals.

War upon a gigantic scale burst suddenly upon a country used only to peace, wholly unprepared to meet the demands made upon it by the sudden gathering of such vast bodies of soldiers, casualties of battle and inevitable sickness. Hospitals had to be hastily improvised, hospital stores provided, and surgeons employed who had never before seen a gun-shot wound or a case of camp fever. But those trying times are past and government has risen in its might and provided every thing which can contribute to the comfort of the sick and wounded soldiers, while surgeons have become thoroughly educated to the work on hand. The sanitary commissions and the various soldiers' aid societies throughout the country have also done very much to alleviate the sufferings of the inmates of the many hospitals.

Your agents would say with confidence to the friends of soldiers in the general hospitals, that they may safely dismiss any fears which they may entertain lest their friends be not well housed, lodged, clad, warmed, fed, and professionally cared for.

All which is respectfully submitted.

APRIL 27th, 1863.

WILLIAM H. COGSWELL,  
WILLIAM M. WHITE.